



# State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE PAMELA Z. SAWYER  
HOUSE REPUBLICAN WHIP  
FIFTY-FIFTH DISTRICT

CAPITOL: 1-800-842-1423  
(860) 240-8700  
FAX: (860) 240-0207

RANKING MEMBER  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MEMBER  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

## *Testimony by Representative Pam Sawyer*

*Public Health Committee*

**HB 5287**

*March 1, 2010 10:00 Room 1D*

### ***RE: - Opposition HB 5287 Acidified Food Products On Residential Farms***

Good morning Chairmen Harris and Ritter, Ranking Members Debicella and Giegler, and members of the Public Health Committee.

Connecticut has worked with farmers over the years to assist them with the safe production and sale of farm produced goods.

I personally have been actively involved four times during my tenure assisting the deliberations between the state agencies and the farmers who have stands on their properties and who have tried to sell their products at state fairs as well as farmer's markets. The resolution each time was to have the products clearly labeled saying 'This Product Was Not Prepared In A Government Inspected Kitchen'; and to be sold only at the farm. Thus buyers are alerted to the farm produced goods verses a canned good produced in a 'Government Inspected' type of kitchen.

The first onerous part of this bill is the mandate that the farm must have the water tested as if it was a *water company* or a *government inspected kitchen*.

This financial burden is truly unnecessary and a hardship!

Consider the science involved in producing the types of products mentioned in the bill:

-Anyone who has ever canned will tell you, you **BOIL** the jars into which you put the **COOKED** product; and

- Seal each jar using a CANNING process that puts the jar under very high pressure and uses steam.
- The water used in the production thus has been thoroughly sanitized by raising it to the boiling temperature, and the high temperature needed to produce steam in the canning process.

In discussing this with the local agency, after the most recent question of one farm stand, I found that the bureaucrat was new, did not have any background in canning or preserving, and admitted that there had been NO incident or complaint of contamination. He said his concern was for the consumer after he SAW the sticker that said 'Not prepared in a *government inspected kitchen*'.

If the state wishes to have the water tested unnecessarily, have the state agents take a water sample at time of inspection and do the water testing at **no cost** to the farmer, and test at a state laboratory.

To add insult to injury to the struggling professional farmers, this bill also requires that they take a COURSE in safe food handling techniques!!!

Every farm family I have worked with has proven to me that they are well aware of the care that must be taken because of the dangers of botulism and e-coli (*escherichia coli*).

Would they use anything less than the best production techniques to feed their families, much less damage their reputation with the public who will eat the *same* foods?

There is a beloved tradition with local residents, tourists and other family members who make special trips to farm stands in order to buy those homemade products made from local produce which cannot be obtained anywhere else. This should be considered a green industry, because it eliminates the middle man, reducing energy usage, etc.

If we continue with legislation like this, that makes production prohibitively expensive, we will in essence put the nail in the coffin for farm produced canned goods!

This is definitely an anti-jobs bill, unfriendly to business as written.

### ***Recommendation for legislation:***

Simply add pickles, salsa, and hot sauces to the jams and jellies exemptions along with the 'vegetables' technical fix.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **HB 5287** and I ask the Committee to oppose this bill as drafted and incorporate these suggested changes.